

**THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER
CONFIRMATION AND CONNECTED
CLASSROOM CLIMATE ON MALAYSIAN
UNIVERSITY PRESERVICE ENGLISH
TEACHERS' WILLINGNESS TO
COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH**

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by

REEM A.H. YOUSEF

**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to

*My family, my beloved husband, Fahed, and my lovely children Abed Al Rahman,
Rama and Lana, I love you all dearly.*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Abstrak	xi
Abstract	xiii
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTORY TO THE STUDY	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	5
1.3 Problem Statement	11
1.4 Purpose of the Study	15
1.5 Research Questions	17
1.6 Significance of the Study	18
1.7 Conceptual Framework	21
1.8 Operational Definitions	24
1.9 Limitations of the Study	27
1.10 Organization of the Thesis	28
1.11 Summary of the Chapter	29
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Introduction	30
2.2 The Importance of English Language Learning in Bridging the Language Gap in Malaysia	30
2.3 The Reticence of Asian Students	36

2.4 WTC in the First Language (L1)	41
2.5 Model of WCT in L2.....	43
2.6 Empirical Studies Conducted on WTC in a Second and in a Foreign Language .	52
2.7 The Concept of Confirmation and Disconfirmation	60
2.8 Confirmation and Disconfirmation Theory	64
2.9 Sieburg's Theory.....	66
2.10 Dance and Larson's Theory.....	70
2.11 Differences between Sieburg's and Larson's Theories of Interpersonal confirmation	72
2.12 Theory of Reasoned Action.....	73
2.13 Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory.....	75
2.13.1 Mediation.....	77
2.13.2 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)	77
2.13.3 Scaffolding.....	78
2.13.4 Self-Regulation	78
2.14 Emotive Variables Contributing to the WTC in L2	80
2.14.1 Self-Confidence	81
2.14.2 Communicative Competence	82
2.14.3 Communication Apprehension	83
2.14.4 Motivation Variables derived from Gardner's Socio-Educational Model	87
2.14.5 The Affective Learning Outcome	90
2.14.6 The Connected Classroom Climate in L2 Classroom.....	93
2.14.7 Teacher Confirmation.....	96
2.15 Empirical Studies of Teacher Confirmation.....	98

2.16 Structural Model and Research Hypotheses	103
2.17 Summary of the chapter.....	109
CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Introduction.....	110
3.2 Research Design.....	110
3.3 Population and Sampling.....	111
3.4 Sample Size	112
3.5 Measures.....	114
3.5.1 WTC in English	114
3.5.2 Communication Confidence	114
3.5.3 Motivation to Learn L2	115
3.5.4 Connected Classroom Climate.....	116
3.5.5 Teacher Confirmation.....	116
3.5.6 Affective Learning	117
3.6 Pre-test and Pilot Test	117
3.6.1 Pretesting	117
3.6.2 Pilot Study	118
3.7 Data Collection and Ethical Procedures.....	119
3.8 Data Preparation and Screening	120
3.8.1 Missing Data.....	120
3.8.2 Univariate and Multivariate Outliers.....	121
3.8.3 Normality.....	122
3.8.4 Multicollinearity.....	122
3.9 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)	123
3.9.1 WTC in English	123

3.9.2 Communication Confidence	124
3.9.3 Motivation to Learn English	126
3.9.4 Connected Classroom Climate.....	127
3.9.5 Teacher Confirmation.....	127
3.9.6 Affective Learning	128
3.10 Statistical Analysis	130
3.10.1 Descriptive Statistics	130
3.11 SEM Analysis	130
3.11.1 Measurement Model.....	131
3.11.2 Assessment of Structural Model	134
3.12 Direct and Indirect Effects.....	135
3.13 Summary of the Chapter.....	136
CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS	137
4.1 Introduction.....	137
4.2 Participant Characteristics	137
4.3 Steps for Structural Equation Model Assessment.....	139
4.3.1 Measurement Model Assessment.....	139
4.3.2 WTC in English	139
4.3.3 Communication Confidence	140
4.3.4 Motivation to Learn English	143
4.3.5 Connected Classroom Climate.....	145
4.3.6 Teacher Confirmation.....	145
4.3.7 Affective Learning	147
4.4 Assessment of Overall Measurement Model.....	149
4.4.1 Convergent Validity	150

4.4.2 Discriminant Validity	152
4.5 The Structural Model	153
4.6 Results for Research Questions	155
4.7 Summary of the Chapter.....	163
CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
5.1 Introduction.....	164
5.2 Summative Statement of Research Findings	164
5.3 Discussion.....	166
5.3.1 Research Question One	167
5.3.2 Research Question Two.....	171
5.3.3 Research Question Three.....	175
5.3.4 Research Question Four	176
5.3.5 Research Question Five.....	178
5.3.6 Research Question Six.....	179
5.4 Implication of the Study	183
5.5 Recommendation for Future Research.....	191
5.6 Conclusion of the Thesis	196
REFERENCES.....	199
Appendix A: Questionnaire and Consent Form.....	229
Appendix B: Approval Letters.....	240
Appendix C: Analysis of Missing Variables	245
Appendix D: Normality Test	247
Appendix E: Multicollinearity Assessment.....	249

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics	118
Table 3.2: Exploratory Factor Analysis for WTC	124
Table 3.3: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Communication Confidence	125
Table 3.4: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Motivation.....	126
Table 3.5: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Connected Classroom Climate.....	127
Table 3.6: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Teacher Confirmation.....	128
Table 3.7: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Affective Learning	129
Table 3.8: Criteria for Model Fit Assessment, Item Reliability and Validity	133
Table 4.1: Participants Characteristics (N=328)	138
Table 4.2: Fit Indices from CFA	150
Table 4.3: Validity and Reliability Assessment of Final Measurement Model	151
Table 4.4: Correlations and Discriminant Validity (N=328)	153
Table 4.5: Parameters Estimation for the Structural Model (N=328)	160
Table 4.6: Standardized Causal Effects for the Final Structural Model	160
Table 4.7: Test of Homogeneity of Variances.....	161
Table 4.8: Means, Std Dev, and results of ANOVA for WTC by ethnic groups	162
Table 4.9: Means, Std Dev, and results of ANOVA for WTC by ethnic and years of study.....	163

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1:1: Conceptual Framework	23
Figure 2:1: MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) Heuristic Model of WTC in L2	45
Figure 2:2: Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action.....	74
Figure 2:3: Gardner's (1985) Socio Educational Model.....	87
Figure 2:4: Hypothesized Model of the Study	108
Figure 3:1: Direct and Indirect Effects	135
Figure 4:1: Measurement Model for WTC	140
Figure 4:2: First-Order Measurement Model of Communication Confidence	141
Figure 4:3: Second-Order Measurement Model of Communication Confidence	142
Figure 4:4: First-Order Measurement Model of Motivation.....	143
Figure 4:5: Second-Order Measurement Model of Motivation.....	144
Figure 4:6: Measurement Model of Connected Classroom Climate	145
Figure 4:7: First-Order Measurement Model of Teacher Confirmation.....	146
Figure 4:8: Second-Order Measurement Model of Teacher Confirmation.....	147
Figure 4:9: First-Order Measurement Model of Affective Learning.....	148
Figure 4:10: Second-Order Measurement Model of Affective Learning	149
Figure 4:11: Structural Model Results.....	154
Figure 5:1: The findings following the format of the hypothesized model showing the significant effects.....	166

**KESAN PENGESAHAN GURU DAN IKLIM KEAKRABAN DALAM
BILIK DARJAH TERHADAP KESEDIAAN GURU PELATIH BAHASA
INGGERIS DI MALAYSIA BERKOMUNIKASI DALAM BAHASA
INGGERIS**

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini ialah meninjau pengaruh langsung dan tidak langsung faktor-faktor eksogenus iaitu pengesahan guru dan keakraban pelajar serta faktor-faktor endogenus iaitu motivasi untuk mempelajari bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua, keyakinan berkomunikasi, dan pembelajaran afektif terhadap kesediaan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggeris dalam kalangan guru-guru pelatih bahasa Inggeris dari beberapa universiti tempatan terpilih di Malaysia. Juga dikaji ialah sama ada terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kesediaan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggeris mengikut kumpulan etnik. Kaedah tinjauan telah digunakan untuk mengutip data. Satu soal selidik yang mengandungi item-item yang diadaptasi dari kajian-kajian lampau telah disediakan dan ditadbir kepada 328 guru pelatih Bahasa Inggeris dari lima universiti di Malaysia. Persampelan rawak berstrata telah digunakan untuk memilih responden dan data telah di analisis melalui permodelan persamaan berstruktur menggunakan SPSS AMOS untuk menguji model hipotesis serta hubungan di antara pembolehubah kajian. Model berstruktur yang terhasil menunjukkan bahawa faktor-faktor *exogenous* melaporkan kesan-kesan langsung yang signifikan terhadap faktor-faktor *endogenous*, iaitu pengesahan guru melaporkan kesan langsung yang signifikan terhadap motivasi, keyakinan berkomunikasi, dan pembelajaran efektif manakala keakraban pelajar melaporkan kesan langsung yang signifikan terhadap motivasi dan pembelajaran afektif. Faktor-

faktor keyakinan berkomunikasi dan pembelajaran efektif pula melaporkan kesan langsung yang signifikan terhadap kesediaan untuk berkomunikasi. Walau bagaimanapun faktor motivasi tidak melaporkan kesan yang signifikan terhadap kesediaan untuk berkomunikasi. Dapatan-dapatan ini menunjukkan bahawa kesediaan untuk berkomunikasi dipengaruhi secara tidak langsung oleh pengesanan guru dan keakraban pelajar iaitu melalui faktor-faktor keyakinan berkomunikasi dan pembelajaran efektif sebagai pembolehubah mediator. Analisis lanjut menggunakan Analisis Varians Sehalu menunjukkan bahawa guru pelatih daripada kumpulan diaspora kecil iaitu etnik India dan Cina melaporkan min-min yang lebih besar secara signifikan terhadap kesediaan untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggeris berbanding guru pelatih daripada kumpulan etnik Melayu yang datang daripada kelompok yang dominan. Dapatan ini menunjukkan bahawa keyakinan berkomunikasi dan pembelajaran efektif adalah faktor-faktor mediator yang penting untuk kesediaan berkomunikasi di dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan guru pelatih Melayu sangat dipengaruhi oleh inersia bahasa pertama. Dapatan ini mencadangkan bahawa guru hendaklah dengan secara sedar dan proaktif meningkatkan pembangunan keyakinan berkomunikasi dan pembelajaran efektif untuk meningkatkan kesediaan berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggeris terutama dalam kalangan guru pelatih Melayu.

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER CONFIRMATION AND CONNECTED CLASSROOM CLIMATE ON MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY PRESERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the direct and indirect influences of exogenous factors, namely, teacher confirmation and connected classroom climate and endogenous factors, namely, motivation to learn English as a second language, communication confidence, and affective learning on willingness to communicate (WTC) in English among Malaysian pre-service English teachers. Also investigated was whether there were differences towards WTC in English by ethnic groups. The survey research method was used to conduct the study. A questionnaire was adapted from previous research and was administered to 328 pre-service English teachers from five universities in Malaysia. Stratified random sampling was utilized to identify the sample and data was analyzed employing structural equation modeling in SPSS and AMOS to test the hypothesized model and the relationships between the study variables. The structural model revealed that the exogenous factors reported significant direct influences on the endogenous factors, namely, teacher confirmation reported significant direct effects on motivation, communication confidence, and affective learning, while connected classroom climate had significant direct influences on motivation and affective learning. Communication Confidence and Affective Learning in turn reported significant direct influences on WTC but there was no significant direct effect on WTC from motivation to learn English, indicating that WTC was indirectly influenced by teacher confirmation and connected classroom climate through communication confidence and affective learning as the

mediating variables. Further analysis using One-way Analysis of Variance revealed that Indian and Chinese pre-service English teachers who were from the smaller ethnic groups reported significantly higher means for WTC in English compared to the Malay pre-service teachers who were from the dominant ethnic group. This study found that communication confidence and affective learning were significant mediating variables for students' WTC and that among the Malay pre-service teachers their WTC in English was influenced by the inertia of their first language. These findings imply that teachers must consciously and pro-actively promote the development of communication confidence and attitudes to improve students' WTC, especially among Malay pre-service teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The term multilingual is defined as the use of two or more languages in a speech community (Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009). With over one hundred living languages spoken by its people, Malaysia easily meets the criterion of a multilingual country. Malaysia's multilingualism stems from its multicultural and multiethnic population. A variety of factors influence Malaysians' choice and use of language and their attitudes toward language. These factors include power relations, language ideologies, cultural background, histories, and people's views of their own and others' identities (Manan, David, Dumanig, & Naqeebullah, 2014).

In 1990, the Malaysian government introduced a plan known as Vision 2020. For Malaysia learners, the primary goal of Vision 2020 is for them to become a fully developed nation by the year 2020. One of the keys to achieving success in this era of globalization is being able to communicate effectively. Because English has become the most widespread language in the world (Kitao & Kitao, 1996) and the global language of business, it is imperative that Malaysian students learn to communicate effectively in English (Idrus & Salleh, 2008).

The objectives of the English language teaching profession are twofold to supply students with a stable foundations in the rules of language teaching practice and to provide them with the practical skills necessary for teaching English to learners (Freitas, 2013). About 90 percent of TESOL (Teaching English to Speaker of other Languages) programs objectives focus on improving students' explicit recognition of

the language, that necessitate learners to deal with the syntactical, morphological, and phonological process of the language, rather than students' ability to use the language (Liu, 1998). TESOL learners assumed that speaking skill was the most important skill for English teachers (Murdoch (1994) and concentrating into the phonological and grammatical approach through teaching, does not mirror the objective of communicative into the syllabus (Chung, 1998). Hence, many of TESOL programs have failed to identify and address the specific needs and interests of their TESOL learners, For example, some TESOL programs have not endeavored to ensure that the teacher education content provided is contextually responsive, to promote self-confidence, and to encourage contributions by non-native speakers instructors to this field (Liu, 1998).

Speaking is “an interactive process of constructing meaning both its form and meaning depend on the context, the participants, their experiences, the environment and the purpose for speaking” (Florez, 1999, p. 1). Speaking is considered to be the most productive and intuitive skills of all the four language skills; reading, writing, speaking and listening, due to its obvious correctness and errors that the learner produces (Khamkhien, 2010). Hence, in order to ensure an effective language use in speaking, oral communication must be integrated in the language learning classroom (Rivers & Temperley, 1978). MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) stated the common purpose of learning languages is “authentic communication between persons of different languages and cultural backgrounds” (p. 559). Interaction is the principle means of communication among individuals. While interaction can be non-verbal as well as verbal, communicating is an operational tool that can influence and create positive or negative relationships. This highlights the importance of finding

ways to encourage oral communication among second language (L2) learners. This is supported by Bygate (1987) when he states,

"Our learners often need to be able to speak with confidence in order to carry out many of their most basic transactions. It is the skill by which they are most frequently judged, and through which they make or lose friends" (p. 1)

Communicative language teaching is assumed to be the dominance approach in the 21st century. The primary purpose of this approach is to enhance learners' communication competence and to build a solid communicative engagement between them (Savignon, 2005). It is a supportive teaching approach with regard to teaching speaking skills to fulfill communicative demands (Khamkhien, 2010). In this regard, communicative language teaching is preferable and might be the active teaching approach (Efrizal, 2012; Snow, 2005). More specifically, students must not only have the competent to communicate but also must have the adequate qualification to be willing to communicate (Dörnyei, 2001). For this reason, the heuristic WTC model has manifested from conditions attached to L2 use.

WTC in L2 has received essence notions in L2 communication and acquisition (Peng, 2007). MacIntyre et al. (1998) heuristic model introduced WTC in L2 as a connection between social, cognitive, and affective factors. However, students' inclination to speak L2 so as to learn is decisive for their L2 acquisition (Skehan, 1991). Researchers in L2 communication have tried to recognize factors that associate with learners' WTC in L2. Some of these factors are situation context such as the numbers of people engage in L2 communication and learners' communication confidence (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000). Others are more general factors such as an

inclination to learn foreign people and culture (Yashima, 2002). Affective factors such as motivation and affective attitudes govern an individual's WTC in L2 (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Previous studies have substantially tested WTC as a forecaster for effective learning L2 (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003).

McCroskey, McCroskey, Mottet, and Richmond (2006) have claimed that the aim of instructional communication studies is to understand “the role and impact of communication in the instructional process across all disciplines and contexts” (p. 35). Researchers have conducted significant investigations to understand the student–teacher relationship and student learning in a multitude of instructional settings (Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009; Klem & Connell, 2004). In fact, teachers can play as facilitator and supporter in a language classroom (Mastoor, 2013). Teachers and their behaviors are considered as influential factors for achievement a second language (Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Tanaka, 2005). This highlights the important role of teachers in designing curricula, building connected classroom climates, and reinforcing language-learning communication among students. Teacher confirmation is such a variable that is related to a positive instructor behavior that can significantly influence students' learning outcomes and behavior in a learning setting (Goodboy & Myers, 2008). Furthermore, supportive and cooperative student to student interactions has been shown to have a meaningful influence on students' involvement in the classroom (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010) and their affective learning (Johnson, 2009).

With the purpose to improve Malaysian learners' speaking competence, it is crucially significant to grasp the constructs that affect language Malaysian learners'

communication and their acquisition of a language through communication. It is rational that WTC attracts attention from researchers. Accordingly, in this study, the researcher proposed a connection between (a) WTC as described by MacIntyre and his associates and (b) other situated, motivational, affective and social variables that could interact with Malaysian students' WTC in English.

1.2 Background of the Study

Malaysians include different ethnic groups such as Malays (67.4%), Indians (7.3%), Chinese (24.6%), and others (0.7%) (Malaysia, 2013). Each of these groups has its own languages, culture, and religion. As a result and especially in Malaysian community a number of languages are prosperity, and these consist of the Malay language (the national language of most ethnic Malays), English (a second language in Malaysia and inserted through the British colonial era), and a number of Indian, Chinese and other marginal languages. When communicating in society, speakers follow certain rules. These rules are related to the society's cultural values (Maros, 2006). In her study on adult Malay speakers learning to communicate in English in a classroom setting, Maros (2006) found that these speakers had a tendency to adhere to their native society's cultural values (e.g., speaking in an indirect manner so as to save face). Maros opined that this adherence to their native society's cultural values may hinder these speakers from communicating effectively in English. Yamat, Fisher, and Rich (2014) emphasized that in addition to enhancing their speaking skills, Malaysian learners need to develop confidence in their abilities to use English. Another important factor influencing students' success is whether the classroom environment is conducive to learning English. Students must also be exposed to the language and be given opportunities to use what they have learned so as to gain

experience and to boost their confidence. Learning a language in a classroom setting is much more than becoming knowledgeable about a subject or memorizing a set of rules to follow; it is an essential life skill that must be developed to communicate effectively.

A perception exists in the TESOL profession, as well as in the general public, that in general Asian students are passive and group oriented, which presumably would make it difficult for these students to seize the linguistic opportunities available to them in a classroom setting (Kobayashi, 2006). Research on ESOL (English to Speaker of other Languages) students has revealed that giving oral presentations in content classes and communicating a problem are the most challenging academic speaking tasks for students (Huang, Cunningham, & Finn, 2010). Therefore, for ESOL students to succeed in a classroom setting, they must learn how to communicate their ideas to their teachers and peers and become proficient in academic speaking (Huang et al., 2010). However, there is a common belief that learning to speak in a second or foreign language is no easy task for most language learners (Elder et al., 2013).

In Malaysia, English second language (ESL) learners in classrooms are facing intervention of their L1 in which it lead to the incorrect employment of morphological, grammatical and syntactical principles in English communication (Che Musa, Lie, & Azman, 2012). Also the rise of self-esteem, communication confidence, and motivation to learn English from instructors did not behold and this in turn reduced learner's interest in learning and speaking English Language inside the classroom (Choy & Troudi, 2006; Zamani, 2002). Jamshidnejad (2011) stated that L2 verbal troubles can be grounded by many factors such as; negative attitudes

toward L2, shortage of communication confidence in language proficiency, deficiency in L2 vocabulary and fear of losing respect from others.

Due to low English-speaking skills in ESL and the EFL classroom (Brown & Yule, 1983), L1 transfer has been recognized as a contributory cause of obstacles to good L2 oral communication (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998; Poulisse, 1997). Using L1 has possibly both positive and negative outcomes (Carless, 2008). Beneficially, it may further social and cognitive purposes. In a social context, it helps communicate directions and rules, to gain attention, or to further proper behaviour, and to assist in classroom supervision. In cognitive purposes, it improves students' comprehension. However, using first language (L1) can be regarded as one of the 'negatives' in L2 communication. L2 is best improved through extensive use of the language with less time using L1 (Tang, 2002). Studies of L2 speaking generally centre on problems of insufficient resources at various stages of speaking (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998; Poulisse, 1997). Resource insufficiency includes difficulties in of the ability to express oneself, attributed to a lack in the speakers' L2 linguistic skill. This difficiency in L2 speaking is due to:

- The L2 system of speaking is not as complete as the L1 system,
- The vocabulary and application of appropriate words are not as reflexive as L1 speaking, and Knowledge of L1 hinders L2 production (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995).

In order to understand the level of English language use in Malaysia, especially in the education domains, Ali (2002) conducted a study that examined the state of teaching English in Malaysia. Some ESL teachers expressed the view that English is not used properly in Malaysian classrooms. The Malaysian ESL teachers suggested

two reasons for this. First, a lack of trained ESL teachers had resulted in lowering the qualifications for teaching English in the classroom. Second, the Malaysian ESL teachers found that there was a lack of language proficiency and pedagogical knowledge among ESL teachers (Ali, 2002). The ESL teachers grasped the difficulties that Malaysian students face when learning the English language.

Malaysian students shared the same respect for authority as students from other Asian countries and viewed their teacher as a “provider” of knowledge (Kirkbride, Tang, and Chaw, 1989). This could be responsible for Malaysian learners’ reluctance to engage and challenge their teacher (Koo, 2003). This perspective discourages participation in the classroom and hampers the students’ acquisition of adequate knowledge and proficiency (Burbules & Berk, 1999). Another reason for Malaysian learners’ reluctance to speak up is their afraid in making errors, losing face, and being ridicules from their friends (Lie., 2003). Concerning the widespread “silence” found in the context of Malaysian ESL lessons, a study conducted by Umadevi (2001) among Malaysian undergraduates at Universiti Teknologi MARA found that these ESL learners were unable to understand a huge part of their lecture and were therefore hardly in a position to ask questions. Moreover, Umadevi found that these students preferred to ask for help from their friends rather than from the lecturer. If their friends were unable to help, they elected to memorize the subject just to be able to pass their examinations.

Hence, the most effective way in which to teach a language among the English language teachers is through the integration of language and content objectives (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2008). Miller and Seller (1985) define curriculum as “an explicitly and implicitly intentional set of interactions designed to facilitate

learning and development and to impose meaning on experience” (p.3). Marzano (1992) and Savoie and Hughes (1994) confirmed that to achieve an effective learning-centered classroom environment, the classroom climate must be set up so that interaction and involvement are necessary for discovering meaning. In which, classroom learning is considered to be a cooperative endeavor between the teacher and learners (Gillies and Boyle (2010).

The present study understands the goal of teaching English in terms of communication. The idea of WTC was primarily presented by McCroskey and colleagues (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1990) based on Burgoon (1976) work on unwillingness to communicate. WTC in L2 is defined as “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2” (MacIntyre et al., 1998; p. 547). According to MacIntyre et al. (1998) WTC in L2 was originally understood in relation to the first, native language (L1). However, WTC in L1 can be defined as an inclination toward communication when voluntary to do it (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Based on the personality orientation that individuals present in their L1 communication, WTC in L2 context was presented by the work of MacIntyre and associates (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Previous researchers have investigated the WTC construct among ESL learners (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Hashimoto, 2002) and EFL learners (Kim, 2004; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima, Zenuk Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004).

In the current study, connected classroom climate refers to “student-to-student perceptions of a supportive and cooperative communication environment in the classroom” (Dwyer et al., 2004, p. 267); In which students feel a sense of security,

respect and supportive inside their classroom. Cohesiveness of the class group in which students support each other in the class was found to conduct an enjoyable climate and influence WTC in L2 (Peng, 2007; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Connected classroom climate appears to instill some key kinds of communication behaviors such as shared humor, openness, honesty, genuineness, vulnerability and compassion among the students themselves (Glaser & Bingham, 2009). Research has also indicated that connected classroom climate may be influenced by instructors' communication effectiveness (Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McMullen, 2011).

On the other vein, teacher-student interaction is the most important factor influencing student success or failure in any courses (Cummins, 1996). This may be particularly true in teaching a language, which is social in nature. In this study, teacher confirmation behaviors, such as demonstrating a variety of teaching style, complying to learner's comments and demonstrating interest in learning will be employed and defined as Ellis (2000) "the transactional process by which teachers communicate to students that they are endorsed, recognized, and acknowledged as valuable, significant individuals" (Ellis, 2000; p. 266). Teacher confirmation is considered to be the most important characteristic of human reaction (Buber, 1957) and a crucial ingredient for certifying mental development and stability (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967).

For the purposes of the current study, affective learning is concerned with students' beliefs, attitudes, values, and the extent of their agreement with the L2 courses. MacIntyre et al. (1998) WTC in L2 supports Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) theory, in which behavioural intentions harmonize with the theory of reasoned

action. In which affective attitudes are one of the main influences of behavioural intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

It has also been shown that positive attitudes and perceptions among the learners in a classroom represent a significant function in the learning process (Marzano, 1992). Marzano (1992) stated that it is necessary to establish positive social interaction among students in the classroom. As It is believed that students and teachers have a significant impact on the learning outcomes through their communication behaviors; not only do teachers influence students and affect the outcomes, but students' interaction among themselves affect the outcomes as well (Wilmot, 1987). According to Verderber (2002), communication is an effective mechanism, indicating an interactive connection between the involving sides.

1.3 Problem Statement

MacIntyre et al. (1998) developed a heuristic model of WTC in L2 that consisted of six layered pyramids. At the apex of the pyramid model is L2 use of the language. Directly below this layer is placed WTC in L2 which denoting its immediate influence on L2 use. The L2 communication confidence and the desire to communicate with a specific person constructs is placed under the WTC in L2 layer, which implying its immediate impact on WTC in L2. They develop this pyramid model descending by consolidating other linguistic, communicative, and social psychological variables such as motivation, attitude, personality and others. They intended to explore a possible connection between all of the variables, in order to adequately appraise the effects and predictability of L2 communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998). They suggested that people intended to use their L1 when they faced comprehension problems and when they lose the competence to achieve their

purposes in L2. They also stated that the development of L2 WTC should be the fundamental aim of any operation learning. A number of empirical studies revealed that L2 communication confidence as the prime predictor of WTC in L2 (Fushino, 2010; MacIntyre et al., 2003; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Hence, Yashima et al. (2004) strongly indicated that researchers on WTC in L2 should concentrate on the contextual or social variables that could enhance or impede learners WTC in L2 classroom settings. In the current study, integrating other contextual or social factors into studies of WTC in L2 has been subjected to investigate among Malaysian ESL learners.

By looking into Malaysian context at the tertiary level, English majors students underscored that instructor teaching styles (one of the dimension of teacher confirmation behaviors) can impact students' learning processes and success in ESL classrooms (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009). Felder & Spurlin (2005) concurred and argued that it is worth trying to match different instructors' teaching styles to which this matching may enhance students' attitudes, behavior, and motivation toward learning (Felder & Henriques, 1995). However, Malaysian learners are looking for some exogenous factors in order for them to be motivated in learning English language (Bidin, Jusoff, Aziz, Salleh, & Tajudin, 2009). Several ways to increase Malaysians' motivation were suggested, such as by (a) providing them with more opportunities for their own learning and increasing their self-driven learning (e.g., by increasing their willingness to talk), (b) providing supportive, conducive, and interactive learning environments for learning English, and (c) concentrating on lower-proficiency students by employing a productive teaching style among the students (Thang, Ting & Jaafar, 2011). A recent study conducted by Nair et al. (2014) revealed that Malaysian university learners' perceptions of their lecturers and

their university setting are playing a conducive role in helping them to talk in English during the L2 classes. In which the instructors who displaying high concern in learning L2 and employing different teaching style instill among the learners a desire to talk in English. Furthermore, the pleasant and favorable university classroom concerned with enhancing students' inclination to talk in English. Indeed, One of the potential reasons of the incompetence use of English language among Malaysian ESL learners are because they do not learn the language successfully (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2009). Consequently, the present study attempts to introduce teacher confirmation and connected classroom climate as important elements for testing its influence into Malaysian WTC in English. These suggestions are interrelated with other complex factors within MacIntyre et al. (1998) Heuristic Model for WTC in L2. Thus, rather than attending to them as isolated factors, it is more productive to investigate their influence simultaneously within MacIntyre et al. (1998) Heuristic Model of WTC in driving WTC in English.

Previous studies consistently found that some teacher communication behaviors such as immediacy (Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986) and teacher caring (Teven & McCroskey, 1997) have a positive impact to learning. The current study concentrates on teacher confirmation, which is one of the variables in ways teachers let students know that they are supported and recognized. Confirmation concept supposes that to develop their personality, people have a real desire to be validated (Dailey, 2006). In a learning environment where students are expected to communicate in English, teacher confirmation could be defined as teachers' efforts to create and maintain a solid social connection with students. In the long term, the social relationship determined through teacher confirmation could be considered a stabilizing factor in this type of learning environment where the focus is on

communication. Hence, teacher confirmation could affect students' language communication. For this reason, this study indicates that teacher confirmation be put in Layer V of the conceptual model by MacIntyre et al. (1998) as an explanation of the factor of social situation.

Student connected classroom climate is employed as another important variable in this study. The integration of this variable seems to support Vygotsky (1978) social constructivism theory. Social constructivism theory is pertinent to WTC as it emphasizes the role of interaction in providing learners with opportunities to use the target language (Allahyar & Nazari, 2012). According to this theory, all cognitive functions are social in origin, and learning involves the integration of learners into a knowledge community. In a learning environment where students are expected to communicate in English, connected classroom climate is defined as the community's structural characteristics comprise personal communication between the students inside the boundary of the classroom in order to achieve intergroup climate situation. In the long term, this climate of personal communication network considered a social and individual context. For this reason, this study suggested that connected classroom climate be put in Layer VI of the conceptual model by MacIntyre et al. (1998) as an explanation of the factor of intergroup climate.

Few studies had taken place among TESL and TESOL pre-service teachers (Copland, 2010; Farrell, 2008; Morton & Gray, 2010). Few scholars have investigated the association between a connected classroom climate and instructor behaviors (Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McMullen, 2012). Scarce discussion has been on how instructors can impact learners' WTC in the L2 setting (Weaver, 2010), not much is known about the influence of teacher confirmation on student behavior

(e.g. WTC in L2) (Campbell, Eichhorn, Basch, & Wolf, 2009). Such kind of instructor manner which has not been investigated sufficiently is teacher confirmation (Ellis, 1998). Little research in studying interpersonal teacher behaviors have taken a role at the higher education level (Fraser, Aldridge, & Soerjaningsih, 2010; Kremer-Hayon & Wubbels, 1992).

As Malaysia is a multiethnic society, there is a greater chance of misunderstanding and miscommunication in English among the learners if they are not familiar with each other's cultures (Sattar, Lah, & Suleiman, 2011). Previous studies found divergence in students' achievement among the three main ethnic groups living in Malaysia namely; Malay, Chinese, and Indian in terms of English language learning (Hashim & Sahil, 1994; Idrus & Salleh, 2008).

It would be interesting to investigate how ESL learners perceive their own WTC in English and how affective factors (such as teacher confirmation, connected classroom climate, motivation to learn L2, communication confidence, and affective learning) influence WTC in English among Malaysian pre-service English teachers. Furthermore, investigating the differences in Malaysian pre-service English teachers towards WTC in English based on ethnic groups would also be interesting to find in this study.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the current study was to investigate the influence of teacher confirmation, connected classroom climate, motivation to learn L2, communication confidence, and affective learning on Malaysian WTC in English. By investigating the relationships between these factors and their underlying measurable items, this

study discovered how these factors simultaneously interacted. The secondary purpose of this study was to determine the differences in Malaysian pre-service English teachers towards WTC in English based on their ethnic groups. The reason for concentrating into WTC in L2 construct instead of the L2 use highlighted that WTC represents the psychological preparedness to use the L2 when the opportunity arises. This requires a focus on the specific moment of decision where a L2 learner chooses to become a L2 speaker. It is suggested that the choice to initiate communication in a L2 is one of the primary facilitators of language use, and as such, may be an important predictor of language survival. As MacIntyre et al. (1998) stated “a program that fails to produce students who are willing to use the language is simply a failed program.” (p. 547). Given the considerations discussed above, the specific objectives of this research were:

1. To investigate whether teacher confirmation has a direct influence on students’ affective learning, motivation to learn L2, students’ communication confidence, and WTC in L2 and an indirect influence on WTC in L2 through students’ affective learning, motivation to learn L2, and students’ communication confidence.
2. To investigate whether connected classroom climate has a direct influence on students’ affective learning, motivation to learn L2 and WTC in L2, and an indirect influence on WTC in L2 through students’ affective learning, and motivation to learn L2.
3. To investigate whether motivation has a direct influence on affective learning, students’ communication confidence in L2 and WTC in L2, and an indirect influence on WTC in L2 through affective learning and students’ communication confidence in L2.

4. To investigate whether communication confidence in L2 has a direct influence on students' WTC in L2 in the classroom.
5. To investigate whether affective learning has a direct influence on students' WTC in L2 in the classroom.
6. To determine the differences in Malaysian pre-service English teachers towards WTC in English based on the three main ethnic groups living in Malaysia namely; Malay, Chinese, and Indian.

1.5 Research Questions

The specific research questions that were originated to structure the study process are as follows:

1. Does teacher confirmation have a direct influence on students' affective learning, motivation to learn L2, students' communication confidence, and WTC in L2, and an indirect influence on WTC in L2 through students' affective learning, motivation to learn L2, and students' communication confidence as mediating variables?
2. Does connected classroom climate have a direct influence on students' affective learning, motivation to learn L2 and WTC in L2, and an indirect influence on WTC in L2 through students' affective learning, and motivation to learn L2 as mediating variables?
3. Does motivation has a direct influence on affective learning, students' communication confidence in L2 and WTC in L2, and an indirect influence on WTC in L2 through affective learning and students' communication confidence in L2 as mediating variables?

4. Does communication confidence in L2 have a direct influence on students' WTC in L2 in the classroom?
5. Does affective learning have a direct influence on students' WTC in L2 in the classroom?
6. Are there any significant differences in Malaysian pre-service English teachers towards WTC in English based on the three major ethnic groups living in Malaysia (Malay, Chinese, and Indian)?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study asserts the importance of the use of the English language in Malaysian classrooms and has both theoretical and instructional embodiments for L2 teaching and learning.

Theoretically, the study employs a structural equation modeling. It is used to jointly measure the relationship between multiple variables and more than one dependent variable. Based on previous studies, this study proposes the probable influence of the suggested variables on students' L2 WTC in their daily classroom settings. The study shows how structural equation modeling can be used to incorporate teacher confirmation behavior and a connected classroom climate along with learners' motivation, their communication confidence, learners' WTC and their affective learning within a single comprehensive model, and how this model can test the interactions between the constructs.

The current study has instructional implications for L2 teaching and learning. The greater a student's WTC in English is the more willing teachers will be to acquire

new teaching strategies and design new curricula to reinforce the demand for communication in turn simplifying students' learning and developing their proficiency in English. Additionally, this study concentrates on undergraduate university students in two programs: TESL and TESOL. The two programs were designed to prepare students who are going to be English teachers with academic and professional training to teach L2. These are pre-service students who can encourage the English department to guide learners to an appreciation of the significance role of WTC as a meaningful element for learning and acquiring the English language in the classroom.

By studying how TESOL pre-service teachers see the worth of learning linguistic theory in their teaching practices curriculum, designers and educators can be guided to make better decisions on the syllabus and narrow the gap between theory and practice. and, in so doing, create coherence in teacher qualification (LaFond & Dogancay-Aktuna, 2009). Research has suggested that the provision of heuristics for pedagogy is one important way in which teachers can better grasp the function of theory in their prosperity (LaFond & Dogancay-Aktuna, 2009). As Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) rightly argues:

‘theories help to bring conscious awareness and questioning of the intuitive aspects of our teaching practice, stimulate new questions in teachers and researchers, help teachers make sense of their experience and facilitate teachers’ and researchers’ professional interactions in the discourse community by providing us with a common toolkit with which to examine our practice and to conduct our investigations’ (p. 292).

The pedagogical implications of the current study are potentially important, particularly if the important connection between teacher confirmation and students' affective learning is established, and can be used as a guide for developing more effective teacher education programs that promote teacher confirmation behavior in teachers by providing insights into the impact of this behavior on student-teacher relations. Moreover, an understanding of the influences of teachers' behavior can be used to reduce apprehensive students' anxiety about speaking in the classroom and ensure their academic success. The advantages of using teacher confirmation behavior in the classroom suggest that these messages work to confirm individuals' personal and social identities. Thus, it stands to reason that confirmation behaviors used by teachers should lead to perceptions of a similar or dissimilar social group status among students and teachers and thus impact teacher-student relational functioning (Hosek, 2011). Furthermore, understanding the connectedness among students may help school administrators to develop policies that promote greater student cooperation. Improving learners' communication confidence through the creation of a supportive connected classroom environment will enhance their oral performance achievements and learning outcomes.

The current study indicates evidence into the importance use of connected classroom climate in the college classroom. Within a connected classroom climate, learners have the opportunity to *do* things with language and to *use* language for many different reasons. According to Berns (1990), it is imperative for learners to participate in such "doing" activities throughout all phases of learning. In a connected classroom, students may feel comfortable working together as a group to persuade (Golish, 1999) their instructor to fulfill their requests (i.e., instructor compliance), be motivated to learn an L2, experience a strengthening of their

affective learning, and resulted to more L2 WTC. Marzano (1992) suggested that the type of classroom climate influences learning in the classroom: A classroom climate in which communication among peers is supported instills a sense of comfort in students, which in turn encourages learning, whereas a classroom climate in which there exists a deficiency approval by instructors and colleagues discourages learning inside the boundaries of the classroom.

Studies have established that WTC coherently influences students' participation in the classroom (Chan & McCroskey, 1987), moreover their inclination to communicate in L2 (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Hence, classroom participation is considered to be a good indicator to enhance student's critical thinking, active learning and speaking skills (Bean & Peterson, 1998). By generating WTC in L2 learners, language instruction can result to more effective and dynamic learners (Kang, 2005).

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This study formulated a structural conceptual model based on various theoretical sources. This study employs MacIntyre et al. (1998) L2 WTC model as the basic model of this study. MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed their model as a combination of various internal and external factors such as linguistic, psychological, and social variables that influence an individual's WTC in L2 and L2 use. In accordance with this model internal factor such as communication confidence and motivation would have an important influence on students' WTC in L2. The current study also supported Gardner (1985) socio educational model in which it established an abstract basis for exploring WTC in an L2 setting. In response to the socio educational

model, MacIntyre et al.'s model describes how motivation influences WTC for successful in second language acquisition.

This study is supported using confirmation theory, which dates back to Buber (1957). Confirmation concept supposes that to develop their personality, people have a real desire to be validated (Dailey, 2006). The present study is also reinforced using Ellis (2004) teacher confirmation model of learning, through the inclusion of teacher confirmation as a substantial variable. Ellis's model emphasizes a relationship between teacher confirmation on affective learning and motivation (Ellis, 2004).

This study is also informed by the central concepts of social constructivism theory, which provide a valuable framework for exploring classroom language interactions. The theory is rooted in the concept that cognitive advancement has its groundings in social connection (Anton, 1999), which provides support functions, and thus social interaction can be used to construct effective support within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), especially in the second language classroom.

This study is also informed by the theory of reasoned action proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), as they posit that behavioral intentions (such as WTC in L2) are affected by two main variables; subjective norms and affective attitudes. MacIntyre et al. (1998) confirm Ajzen and Fishbein's theory, in which behavioral intentions harmonize with the theory of reasoned action. However, for the present study, affective learning is related to students' attitudes, emotions, beliefs, and levels of approval of the English courses. However, these attitudes extend a direct impact on behavior intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Consequently, a significant relationship between affective learning and WTC in L2 is expected. Chapter Two examines the

hypotheses and shows how these theories serve as the theoretical underpinnings for this study.

The conceptual model in Figure 1:1 posits that there are two independent variables comprising of exogenous factors, namely, teacher confirmation and connected classroom climate with three mediating variables that comprise of endogenous factors, namely, communication confidence, motivation to learn L2 and affective learning. All of these constructs have direct or indirect influences on the dependent variable which is WTC in L2. The hypothesized model at the end of chapter two examines how these theories and hypotheses served as the theoretical bases for the current study.

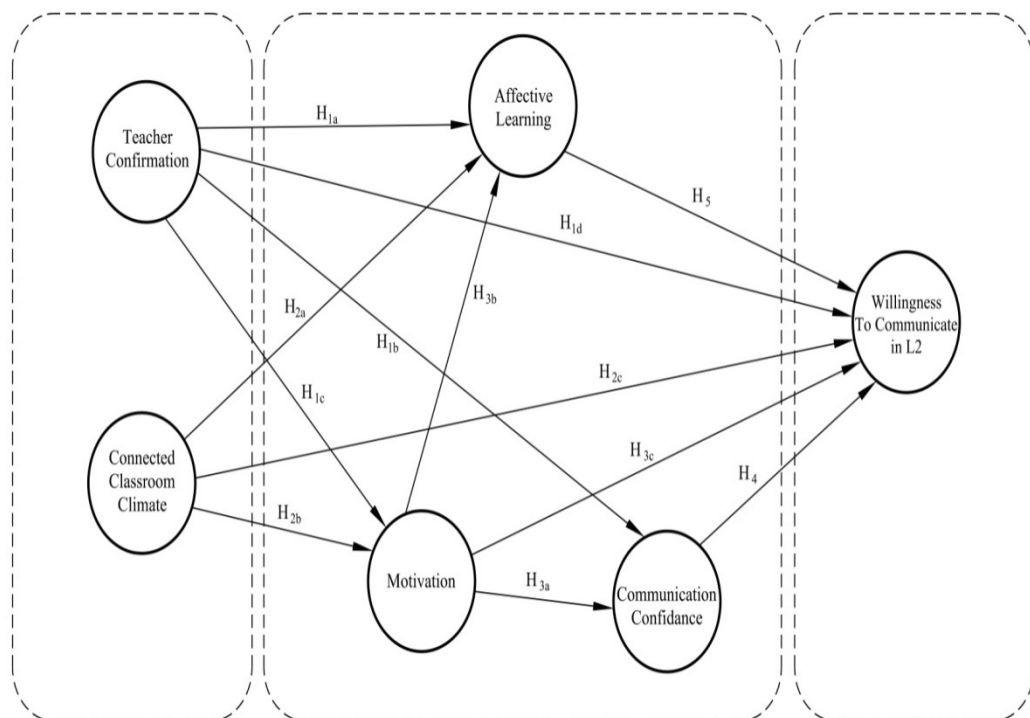


Figure 1:1: Conceptual Framework

1.8 Operational Definitions

The definitions of the terms employed in the current study are explained as follows:

- **WTC in L2:** MacIntyre et al. (1998) defined WTC in L2 as “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2” (p. 547). In the current study, it includes a student’s inclination and interest in speaking English language whenever the student has the opportunity to use it inside their classroom.
- **Linguistic Self-Confidence:** This is determined as a conjunction of absence of apprehension and consciousness of the language competence (Clément, 1986). In the current study, communication confidence in English language was affected by two factors namely; communication competence in speaking English and lack of apprehension in speaking English language.
- **Communication Competence:** This is defined as an individual’s assessment of his or her efficiency in oral communication. McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) states that communicative competence is the “adequate ability to pass along or give information; the ability to make known by talking or writing” (p. 109). In the present study, it can be defined as a learner’s self-evaluation of his or her oral language proficiency.
- **Communication Apprehension:** This is defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1997, p. 192). High levels of communication apprehension are associated with weak communication skills